

Step 2: Explore Your Options

Have you ever noticed that sometimes your friend's shirt looks a lot better on your friend than on you? Don't you hate it when you see a CD you just bought for \$13.99 on sale for \$10? And how does this relate to college and career planning, anyway? Good question. Jobs, careers, and colleges are just like anything else you buy. Every job or college class costs you time, energy, and money. And there are good and bad college bargains out there. It's always best to shop around and compare your options. Then make the right choices for you.

Your college choices, just like your clothing choices, should reflect your taste. What suits your friend may not work for your unique interests and needs. Remember, an ugly shirt might cost you \$25, but college costs a whole lot more and all sales are final. Your best bet is to do some smart shopping before you spend your hard-earned cash.

Research and compare your options for the future, including career clusters, job opportunities, college degrees, and types of colleges. Think about how they match up with your interests from the last section.

Exploring Careers and Jobs

How many different jobs can you name? Most teens can name high-profile jobs like lawyer, doctor, dentist, and engineer, but what about jobs in art, radio and television, manufacturing, finance, construction, or scientific research. There are thousands of jobs. How can you find the one that's right for you?

A good place to start your search is with your school counselor. Ask to take a career interest inventory. You may have already done this, but it doesn't hurt to do it again. These short quizzes ask you questions like: Do you like to draw, read, or solve puzzles? There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. Based on your answers, you'll get a list of career paths that match your interests.

Keep in mind, interest inventories point out a few career pathways, but the results are only suggestions. And, your likes and dislikes may change over time. So, research all career groups and jobs that you think you might like, not just those suggested by your interest inventory.

“Wisdom
begins
in
Wonder.”
—Socrates

Washington Career Pathways

Career pathways are groups of jobs or professions that require similar interests, skills, and abilities. Jobs can fit into more than one career cluster. Web designers, for example, mix business, technology, and graphic design. Look for careers that combine several of your interests and skills.

Career Pathway	Agriculture, Science and Natural Resources	Art, Media, Communications, and Design	Business, Management, and Finance	Education, Social, and Health Services	Engineering, Science, and Technology
Career Focus	Working with and managing resources in the natural world.	Using ideas and information to communicate with people.	Working with data, numbers, and people in the business world.	Working to help people and solve social problems.	Working with objects, data, and ideas to create, move, change, operate, or build things.
More Information	Agriculture and Natural resources work is often done in open outdoor spaces. Many people work 50 hours or more each week. Educational requirements vary.	Communications professions are very competitive. Creativity, reading, writing, and critical thinking are important skills. Educational requirements vary.	Management professionals usually work in offices with computers, budgets, and accounts. These jobs often require a two- or four-year college degree.	Human services workers need excellent communication skills to work with different types of people. Educational requirements vary widely.	Science and technology workers design buildings, improve technology, and conduct scientific research. Workers may also operate heavy equipment. Educational requirements vary.
Sample Jobs	Farmer/Rancher Fisherman Forest Ranger Geologist Surveyor Timber Harvester Veterinarian	Actor Director Graphic Designer Journalist Librarian Playwright Spokesperson	Accountant Business Owner Office Manager Salesperson Secretary Stock Broker Store Manager	Cosmetologist Doctor Firefighter Police Officer Social Worker Teacher Travel Agent	Air Traffic Controller Architect Computer Scientist Electrician Engineer HVAC Technician Mechanic

Researching Careers

Once you've decided on two or three career pathways that interest you, find out what they're like in the real world. What can you expect to earn? What are the working conditions? How many jobs will be open in the future? It's important to learn more about careers and jobs before you decide on a job, college, or major.

There are several ways to get this information. The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics Online at <http://www.bls.gov> has information about career pathways in the *Career Guide to Industries*. The career guide tells you which skills, abilities, and interests are important for each pathway, what jobs are available, and what pay and benefits you can expect.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics Online also has information about specific jobs. Every two years, the bureau publishes the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. This tells you what workers do on the job, how much training and education is needed, and how many jobs will be available in the future. These tools can help you decide if a career pathway or job is right for you.

Finally, you might be able to use the Washington Occupation Information System (WOIS) in your school library or guidance office. WOIS has information on over 500 jobs and over 400 education programs. It includes almost all recognized college and trade schools in Washington, and helps you learn more about the job market.

If you don't have Internet access, many public libraries have Internet or hard copies of the *Career Guide to Industries* and the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. And, talk to your school or guidance counselor about careers in your own city or town.





“Research
is formalized.
curiosity.
It is poking and prying with a
purpose.”
—Zora Neale Hurston




Opportunities for Success

Different careers require different types of education and training. You can complete some degrees in a short time; others take longer. Some are specific, focusing on the skills and knowledge you need for a particular job; others are more broad. On the next page you'll find a chart that explains the type of education required for different jobs.

Most college degree programs are divided into undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs. Undergraduate programs are usually for people who don't have a four-year bachelor's degree. Graduate programs are higher degrees for people who have already earned a four-year degree. And professional programs offer more advanced degrees in professions like medical and veterinary science, social work, and law.

If you haven't already explored the career pathways and jobs that interest you, take time to do that now. What kind of higher education do they require?

Undergraduate Programs	Degree/Program	Job Description	How Long?
	CERTIFICATE	<p>Some certificates prepare you for entry-level professional jobs, like legal assistant or secretary. Others add to the education you already have and increase your existing job skills, like emergency medical technicians.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Bookkeeper ▸ Daycare Worker ▸ Medical or Dental Assistant ▸ Truck Driver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school diploma or GED • 1 to 2 years of higher education 
	APPRENTICESHIP	<p>Apprenticeship programs combine classroom study with on-the-job training. Apprentices or trainees learn skilled trades, like plumbing, masonry, firefighting, or carpentry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Electrician ▸ Firefighter ▸ Stone Mason ▸ Welder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school diploma or GED • 2 to 3 years of higher education 
	ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE	<p>Associate's degrees often concentrate on the skills you need for a specific career, like electronics or early childhood education. With some associate's degrees, you can transfer to a four-year college, complete just two more years of college, and get a bachelor's degree.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Administrative Assistant ▸ Engineering Technician ▸ Human Resources Specialist ▸ Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school diploma or GED • 2 to 4 years of higher education 
	BACHELOR'S DEGREE	<p>Bachelor's or four-year degrees require general and specific courses. Usually, students choose one or two subjects to study in depth. These subjects are called majors or areas of concentration. Teachers, writers, engineers, and entry-level managers usually have these degrees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Architect ▸ Cartoonist ▸ Computer Programmer ▸ Stock Broker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school diploma or GED • 4 to 6 years of higher education 

Graduate and Professional Programs	Degree/Program	Job Description	How Long?
	MASTER'S DEGREE	<p>Master's degree students usually have a bachelor's degree, some work experience, and the desire to continue studying a subject. These programs build on the information you learn in undergraduate classes and help you advance your career. People often earn Master of Business Administration (MBA) degrees to get ahead in the business world.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Hospital Administrator ▸ Marriage and Family Counselor ▸ Physician Assistant (PA) ▸ School Principal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school diploma or GED • 6 to 8 years of higher education 
	PROFESSIONAL DEGREE	<p>Professional programs require advanced study of a specific profession like veterinary science, law, or social work. To work in these career fields, you often have to pass a state or national exam. Professional degree programs prepare you for the exams and the work world. Professional degrees include MD for doctors, DDS for dentists, and JD for lawyers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Chiropractor ▸ Pharmacist ▸ Priest or Minister ▸ Social Worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school diploma or GED • 7 to 9 years of higher education 
	DOCTORAL DEGREE	<p>Doctoral degrees are the highest degrees offered by colleges. They are awarded in broad subjects like history, biology, and music. These programs can take many years to complete. Doctoral candidates must research an original topic, write a lengthy research paper, and defend their research in front of a panel of experts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ College Professor ▸ Economist ▸ Psychologist ▸ School Superintendent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school diploma or GED • 8 to 10 years of higher education 

Types of Colleges

Now that you have some idea about the type of degree or education you need to get the career you want, you might like to know which schools and colleges offer those programs.

► Four-year colleges and universities

are popular choices for students who go to college right after high school. These can be public, like The Evergreen State College, or private, like Whitworth College. State and federal governments manage public colleges; private organizations and religious groups run private colleges. Both types offer certificates, bachelor's (sometimes called four-year degrees), master's, professional, and doctoral degrees in areas such as business administration, history, biology, math, English, education, and more.

► Two-year colleges

are usually called community or technical colleges. In some states they are called junior colleges. Examples of these include Big Bend Community College and Lake Washington Technical College. These schools offer associate's degrees (sometimes called two-year degrees) and certificate programs. Washington community and technical colleges teach specific subjects like computer programming, graphic design, early childhood education, and automotive technology, and general subjects like history, math, and English. With some two-year degrees, you can transfer directly to a four-year school.

► Private vocational colleges

are sometimes called voc-tech or trade schools. They often partner with unions and trade groups to offer apprentice and journeyman programs in fields like plumbing, carpentry, or welding. The length of each program varies, but many can take three or more years to complete.

► Proprietary or for-profit schools

can offer master's and bachelor's degrees, but most offer associate's degrees or certificates in office management, medical assistance, cosmetology, dental hygiene, computer systems engineering, and more. Examples of these schools include the University of Phoenix, Bryman College, and Clare's Beauty College. Again, the length of each program varies. Many take less than one year to complete.

To search for more information about colleges and universities visit:

- College Express www.collegexpress.com
- College is Possible www.collegeispossible.org
- College Net, college searches www.collegenet.com
- Making School Count www.makingitcount.com

Be Prepared for Everything

Why does a writer need to know complex math? Why does a scientist need to understand Shakespeare? The truth is, core courses like math, science, English, and history teach you how to read, write, think, reason, and compute. They also help you understand the world and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills—skills that will help you throughout your life. Make sure you prepare and keep your college and career options open by taking a series of tough core courses throughout high school.

Military Careers and Colleges

Sometimes students want career training that's different from the normal college routine. The U.S. Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, National Guard, and Navy are good examples. They offer more than 4,000 different jobs, training programs, and college options to get you ready for a military career.

Before you decide on this type of career, you should know some basic facts about military life. First, military jobs can be full-time (active duty) or part-time (reserve duty) and you don't have to enlist right after high school. You can join after college or during college. You can even go to a four-year military academy to become an officer. Officers are supervisors and leaders.

Even in the military, a college degree or higher education helps you get ahead. Going to college shows that you are committed to being the best service member you can be. And, if you know more and can do more than others, you are more likely to be promoted or advanced.

In addition to physical fitness, good grades in math, science, and language classes can boost your odds of working in elite fields. Many military jobs use high-tech equipment or require advanced training.

You can also explore military life without making a long-term commitment. Some high schools have Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps programs (JROTC), that let you see what military life is like while you're still in high school. These programs may include summer camps, study help, and leadership training. Check with your school counselor for more information.

Finally, it's important to remember that your first job in the military is to defend the country, wherever that takes you in the world. If you're thinking about a military career, explore your options, talk to service members or recruiters, and ask a lot of questions. Military life is not for everyone, so make sure you get all the facts.

For more information about military careers and education programs, visit:

General Information, all branches of service.....	www.todaysmilitary.com
Army	www.goarmy.com
Navy	www.navy.com
Air Force.....	www.airforce.com
Marines	www.marines.com
Coast Guard	www.gocoastguard.com
National Guard	www.ngb.army.mil

For more information about the U.S. military academies, visit:

U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York	www.usma.edu
U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland	www.usna.edu
U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado	www.usafa.edu
U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut.....	www.cga.edu

► The Service Academies

The government runs these famous military colleges. They have names like West Point and Annapolis. Students, called cadets, don't pay any tuition or fees and get a monthly allowance. Graduates agree to serve on active duty for at least five years. These are very competitive schools. If you're interested, meet with your school counselor at the end of your junior year or very early in your senior year.

► Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC)

During college, and in addition to regular classes, students (cadets) in ROTC take short military science courses. They also wear uniforms once a week and participate in military training during the summer. After graduation, cadets become full military officers. Some colleges do not offer ROTC, so check with the admissions office at your college of choice.

► Officer Candidate Schools (OCS) or Officer Training Schools (OTS)

Any college graduate under age 26 can apply to go to an OCS or OTS. Adults over 26 can request to have the age limit waived. These schools are 10- to 17-week programs, which offer demanding physical and leadership training. When the training is complete, graduates receive a commission and become military officers.